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Protect yourself from date rape drugs

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Recommended Citation

University of Montana–Missoula. Office of University Relations, "Protect yourself from date rape drugs" (2002). *University of Montana News Releases, 1928, 1956-present*. 17758.
<https://scholarworks.umt.edu/newsreleases/17758>

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The University of
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NEWS RELEASE

March 14, 2002

Contact: Ken Welt, director, Counseling and Psychological Services, (406) 243-4711.

PROTECT YOURSELF FROM DATE RAPE DRUGS

MISSOULA--

It happens. You're at a bar and you excuse yourself to go to the restroom. Or maybe you're at a party and you turn away for a moment to talk with a friend. Either way, you take your eyes off your drink because, hey, you're among friends, and anyway, this is Montana. You're safe here, right?

Think again.

The use of date rape drugs is on the rise across the country, and unfortunately, Montana is not immune. Incidents involving drugs like Rohypnol, GHB, GHL and Ketalar are being reported more frequently in Missoula, according to Ken Welt, director of Counseling and Psychological Services at The University of Montana.

"There has been some anecdotal evidence suggesting that these drugs have been used in Missoula," Welt said. "We are trying to remind students to be cautious and responsible."

It only takes a second for an attacker to toss a pill into the unguarded glass, can or bottle of a potential victim. The drug dissolves into the drink, often becoming virtually impossible to taste, see or smell. Within about 30 minutes, the victim may begin to feel unusually intoxicated and uninhibited. Within an hour or two, she or he may black out or pass out.

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Victims of date rape drugs often wake up with little or no memory of the night before, feeling hung over, disoriented and confused. They may feel as if they had sex.

If you suspect you've been drugged and/or raped, here's what to do:

- Get to a safe place immediately.
- Ask a trusted friend to stay with you and help you.
- As soon as possible, report the incident to the authorities. Call the campus Office of Public Safety at 243-4000 or the Missoula Police Department at 9-1-1.
- Preserve as much physical evidence as possible. This means trying not to urinate, shower, bathe or douche. Save the clothing you were wearing. If you can, save the drink for testing.
- Get to a hospital emergency room immediately. The hospital will examine you and collect evidence, including a urine sample for drug toxicology testing. Testing may be successful up to 72 hours after ingestion.
- Call a rape crisis center for support. Local 24-hour hotlines are operated by UM's Student Assault Recovery Service, 243-5244, and the Missoula YWCA, 542-1944.

Date rape drugs can be fatal, causing breathing difficulties and low blood pressure, especially when combined with alcohol or other drugs and medications. It is important to seek medical attention if you suspect you have been drugged.

SIDEBAR:

When it comes to date rape, prevention is definitely the best medicine. Here's how to

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take care of yourself and your friends:

- Bring your own drinks to parties.
- Don't drink beverages you didn't open yourself.
- Don't drink from a punch bowl.
- Don't share or exchange drinks with anyone.
- Don't leave your drink unattended.
- Don't drink anything that has an unusual taste or appearance.
- Don't mix drugs and alcohol.
- Even if nobody will be driving, designate a "sober person" and periodically check up on each other when you are out.
- Take action if one of your friends appears very intoxicated, gets sick after drinking or passes out. Call 9-1-1 for emergency assistance if necessary.
- Intervene if think you see someone dosing a drink. Confront the person, warn potential victims and get help.
- Share this information with friends and make a plan to protect each other.

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PS
Local
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